Some of the nation’s best and brightest are choosing Washington University School of Law.

A Macedonian lawyer committed to nation building in her native land, a trained geneticist, an award-winning film writer, and an aspiring corporate lawyer—these and about 280 others fill the ranks of the School of Law’s first-year JD and advanced-degree students. The lawyers-in-training and attorneys pursuing specialized degrees arrived with a strong sense of vocation and a commitment to working for justice here and abroad.

Jasna Dobricik, LLM ’05

“I come from a country with a history of conflict,” says Jasna Dobricik. After receiving her LLM in United States law, she plans to assist in building democratic institutions in Macedonia, as her homeland seeks to rise from the ethnic strife following the breakup of Yugoslavia. “I really want to work to help re-establish a just society,” she says.

While a law student at the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Macedonia’s capital, Dobricik volunteered with the Open Society Institute–Macedonia. This Soros Foundation project works to build all the features of an open society—the rule of law, health and education programs, political awareness.

She helped implement the Street Law Program, a civic education program established at Georgetown University. “It was very interesting because elections were unknown in Macedonia,” Dobricik says. To introduce the fundamentals of participatory democracy, her team developed and taught a high school curriculum and extracurricular activities for students throughout rural Macedonia. After graduation, she worked for the institute full time for four years.

She also has maximized other opportunities to deepen her understanding of democratic societies, taking several conflict resolution and mediation courses, including one in the United States in 2001.

“I was a new person afterward,” she says, as a result of meeting people from different places and cultures—Israel, Palestine, Pakistan, India, Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus—who were tragically experienced with conflict. Dobricik also heard heartening accounts of rebuilding trust among cultures.

While she understands the challenges facing her native country, she sees hopeful signs in a new coalition of political groups and perceptible progress toward Macedonia’s goals of establishing justice, building a sound economy, and, ultimately, joining NATO and the European Union.

For now, Dobricik is happy to be at Washington University, where she’s studying with the help of a Ron Brown Fellowship from the United States Department of State. She’s delighted with the sense of community she’s found at the law school. “I’ve never met so many friendly people,” she says. “The environment is wonderful.”

Jessica Golby, JD ’07

As a trained scientist, Jessica Golby brings an unconventional background to the School of Law. With an undergraduate biology degree from Notre Dame
University and a doctorate in genetics from the University of Washington, she enrolled expecting to pursue a career in biotechnology or health law. For her, it was an interest born at the intersection of science and public policy, where issues like stem cell research and the privacy of genetic information loom large.

While in graduate school she attended a series of workshops and conferences, including a cell biology conference in Washington, D.C., where Christopher Reeve spoke about the critical role scientists must play in contemporary policy debates. “It was inspirational,” she recalls, and illuminated the need for advanced scientific understanding in formulating and applying the law.

Combining her science background with legal studies has produced new options. “I find I’m interested in various areas of the law,” she observes. In particular, intellectual property and tort law intrigue her. Her science background could be useful in both fields, either in the application of copyrights and patents to biotechnology or in understanding the complexities of medical issues in torts.

Born and raised in St. Louis, Golby chose Washington University for its program and because, she adds, “my entire family is here.” She is thoroughly pleased with her choice. “I could not be happier with my course work,” she says. After the somewhat detached world of science, she finds herself thriving on the new content of her studies. “Every day,” she notes, “we’re reading these very human stories about things that are relevant to people and the problems they face.”

Other pluses: “I’ve been really happy with how accessible the professors are,” she says, “and how willing they are to meet outside of class.” The community spirit and cooperation among students gratify her as well. “The atmosphere is really collaborative,” she observes.

Jessica Golby

"Every day we’re reading these very human stories about things that are relevant to people and the problems they face."

Nick Rogers, JD ’07

An award-winning film writer/producer, Nick Rogers has segued from the wry comedy of Mrs. Pilgrim Goes to Hollywood to juggling the demands of course work, the Student Faculty Selection Committee, and the Student Bar Association.

While earning a BFA in film from Florida State University, Rogers hatched the idea for Mrs. Pilgrim, an aging kindergarten teacher who retires to take her beloved annual “5 Food Groups” school play to Hollywood for production as a major motion picture. He wrote the film after graduation and managed, through friends of friends, to convince actors Ted Danson and Mary Steenburgen to accept small roles. The 40-minute movie, which played at film festivals from London to Newport Beach, also won two awards, for best “mockumentary” and best senior-focused film at the Bare Bones Independent Film Festival in Oklahoma.

Rogers then taught theater, communications, and public speaking at his high school alma mater in Little Rock, Arkansas.

J oe Angeles

"My internship offered a great chance to do pure policy without the politics."

Nick Rogers
But he began to be pulled in a new direction. Contributing was his family’s strong tradition of political engagement—his grandfather had served in the Arkansas House of Representatives for 25 years, and his mother was school board president. This tradition combined with his love of writing, particularly speechwriting, to lead him to law school.

To help prepare for a law career, he accepted an internship in fall 2003 with former President Bill Clinton, working on the president’s correspondence. As an aide, he was involved in diverse issues—small business development in Harlem, earthquake relief in India, the global battle against AIDS.

“My internship offered a great chance to do pure policy without the politics,” Rogers says. He continues to work occasionally for Clinton, serving on his advance staff and going out with the Secret Service detail to make sure sites are logistically ready.

Now Rogers is thinking that he might like to run for office. He successfully stood for election as Student Bar Association representative, and Arkansas’ familiar political landscape beckons. “I think I’d like to be the guy delivering the speech,” he says with a grin.

By the Numbers

The School of Law’s 238 first-year JD candidates were chosen from more than 3,100 applicants in 2004. Twenty percent are minorities. Ages range from 21 to 48. Though the largest single group comes from Missouri, for the first time this year Californians are the second-largest contingent; Illinois, Ohio, and New York also contributed substantial numbers. In all, 38 states are represented, and students come from Canada, Hong Kong, and Germany as well.

The median undergraduate grade-point average is 3.6, and the median LSAT is 165. Undergraduate majors range across the academic landscape: from science and engineering to business and economics to English, history, political science, and the social sciences. Twenty-six members of the class completed their undergraduate work at Washington University; 10 come from Duke; seven from the University of California at Berkeley, Yale, Stanford, Princeton, Harvard, Cornell, and Brown Universities, as well as the University of Tokyo, also are represented.

In the LLM ranks, 11 are studying intellectual property law, 15 are enrolled in the tax law program, and 36 are pursuing an LLM in United States law. In all, more than 200 applied for the LLM programs.
negotiating mergers and acquisitions,” he explains.

After he finishes his law degree, he hopes to work first in a law firm and then join a corporate legal department.

He’s also committed to a healthy balance in his life. Though unmarried, he has a growing appreciation for the importance of family. “I’ve really started to value the work and effort my parents put into my education,” he explains. “Up to the fifth grade, I was a C student. But my mom and dad never gave up on me. I want to be able to do the same for my own family."

Although he had expected to attend law school on the East Coast or in Detroit, Williams chose Washington University after weighing different offers and programs. His experience so far has emphatically confirmed his decision: “I love St. Louis.”

As to the law school, “it’s interesting and challenging,” he remarks. He admires the School’s steady climb in the rankings and its dedication to excellence in legal education. He also appreciates his fellow students’ congeniality. ♦

Who’s Their Favorite Supreme Court Justice and Other Intriguing Survey Results

They’re bright and ambitious. They’re well traveled. They’re funny. And, by a substantial margin, they name Sandra Day O’Connor as their favorite Supreme Court justice (36 votes; the second favorite is Antonin Scalia at 25).

A light-hearted online survey revealed these findings and more about this year’s incoming law students, who answered queries about everything from their professional aspirations to favorite movies to tattoos (90 percent have no tattoos, but five respondents admitted to having two or more).

A substantial plurality—44 percent—aspire to partnership in a law firm. Nearly a fifth, 17.3 percent, hope to practice public interest law; 10 percent plan a business career; 8 percent hope to teach law; and 6 percent want to serve as prosecutors.

Respondents are looking forward to the intellectual challenge of law school and the opportunity to make interesting new friends. Several are eager to put the law to work for the betterment of humankind; one likes the prospect of discovering new ways to represent marginalized people. One can’t wait to say, “Objection, Your Honor.” And a few unliberated men are excited about meeting “smart law babes.”

Asked what they’d be doing if they weren’t in law school, 54 percent said they’d be working; 27.5 percent said they’d be in a different graduate program; and another 27.5 percent confessed to wanderlust, venturing that they’d be traveling the world. Not surprising, because several of these students already have visited exotic places—many Western and Eastern European countries, Asia, the Middle East, Australia and the Pacific, Central and South America, and Africa. One was in Pamplona, Spain, for the running of the bulls; another visited Europe’s northernmost point in Nordkapp, Norway. Nebraska got two votes as an “exotic” destination.

As political prognosticators, though, the incoming class missed the mark: 58 percent expected John Kerry to be elected president; only 37 percent forecast George Bush’s victory; and, loyalists to the end, a handful predicted that Ralph Nader would win in a landslide.